ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

YUMI SHIMADA
The University of Tennessee Chattanooga Center for Global Education
During my first year, I visited 14 different K-12 public schools, reaching 2,483 students. Through my presentations, students learned about general Japan-related topics including geography, population, pop culture, food, language, and school life. Also, they experienced hands-on Japan-related activities such as origami, calligraphy, and chopstick challenges. It was very interesting to see how students react to Japan and gaining knowledge about Japanese culture.

At one school, I gave a presentation to the entire student population about my own life experience. I discussed living abroad at a young age, traveling, and the importance of exchange and cultural identity. I was happy to share my experiences with middle and high school students. I believe attending this event helped the students increase their cultural awareness and expand their global perspective.

I appreciate Center for Global Education office for all the support I have received, and for taking advantage of this great opportunity to promote Japanese culture to the Greater Chattanooga Area.

In this report, I would like to highlight my top three outreach activities. These include school visits, community engagement, and a Japanese movie event. I have accomplished these activities with great support from my hosting institution — the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga — and many community partners here in Chattanooga.
2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
- Performing on- and off-campus outreach activities

Festivals

I have participated in eight festivals so far. It is always nice to meet a lot of people and cooperate with student volunteers to make events more efficient and collaborative.

During International Education Week, which took place in November 2019, I organized a couple of Japan-related events for the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. One was a student performance of the traditional Japanese fisherman dance, “Soranbushi,” at the International Education Week opening ceremony. It was fun teaching the dance to members of Japan Table, a club for students interested in Japan. Our performance was a big success.

My first off-campus outdoor event was Chattanooga’s Park(ing) day in September 2019. In this event, community organizations decorate a parking space downtown and showcase their creativity. I turned my space into a display of Japanese culture, complete with Japanese ornaments and wasabi peas for tasting. Student volunteers helped me run a “chopstick challenge” and teach Pikachu origami. The students were very helpful, and around 140 people stopped by our booth.

Zoom Events

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, beginning in mid-March I stopped holding in-person events. Instead, I switched to a virtual format using Zoom. It was challenging at first to adjust to working from home, but I slowly figured out how to enjoy this new situation. Hosting virtual events has allowed me to reach a wider audience, including people from as far outside of Chattanooga as Nashville and Atlanta (which are both about two hours away by car).

I have hosted four online origami events.

In June, I collaborated with JET alumni to host the “Japanese Language and Culture Series,” a four-week, twice-weekly virtual event series sponsored by the Chattanooga School of Language. We covered various topics related to Japan, such as Japanese slang, travel tips, lifestyle differences between Japan and the U.S., anime, and Japanese nightlife. We also invited special guests: Ms. Dawn Mostow, a designer known for her Dawnamatix clothing line, talked about Harajuku fashion, and Mr. Jinmo Avant-attaque performed Japanese calligraphy and Avant Carde music. We had more than 10 attendees for each session. Everyone, including myself, was able to learn new things about Japan from different perspectives.
**Creative Discovery Museum**

I have developed a long-term partnership with the Creative Discovery Museum. I hold events there twice a month, including cooking classes and arts and craft classes such as origami and calligraphy. I have been glad to see not only children having fun, but also adults who are interested in Japanese culture.

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**Japanese Casual Speaking class**

I have started teaching a Japanese casual speaking class once a month at I go Tokyo which is a unique boutique store in Chattanooga featuring a variety of gifts, ceramics, stationery, fabrics and more imported from Japan. Each class had around ten participants and we practiced speaking Japanese using themed vocabularies and learned about seasonal events in Japan.

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3. JAPANESE MOVIE EVENT

- Collaborating with the local community and the Consulate-General of Japan in Nashville.

This event, held in February at the Regal Hamilton Place movie theater, was the most successful of the year so far. I used a grant from the Consulate-General of Japan in Nashville and worked with local businesses to host this event.

Since I was living with a Jewish family, I took the opportunity to showcase the Japanese film: **Persona Non Grata: The Chiune Sugihara Story** with the Chattanooga community. This film tells the true story of a Japanese diplomat who risked his career to save thousands of Jews.

To begin the event, guest speaker Sonia Milrod, the daughter of a “Sugihara Survivor,” told her family’s incredible story. The audience also heard a speech by the Japanese Consul-General, Ms. Kayoko Fukushima. I am grateful to Ms. Fukushima, the Consulate-General, and the rest of everyone else who helped make this event happen.

About 70 people attended, and the event received a lot of positive feedback. Audience members said they had learned about Japanese history through the movie. I will continue to work together with community partners to plan wonderful events like this and contribute to the promotion of Japanese culture in the Chattanooga community.
MY GOALS FOR THE NEXT YEAR (2020-2021)

Because the COVID-19 has brought new challenges to my work, I am not sure what will happen this coming year. I hope things will slowly return to “normal,” giving me chances to meet new people and make a bigger impact though face-to-face activities.

However, I am happy that I still have ways to achieve my mission. Furthermore, the unexpected challenges of this year have been a great chance for me to think about the future sustainability of the work I am doing now. My main goal for the next year, then, is to find a way to create sustainable content to pass along to this community. I look forward to continuing to expand awareness of Japanese culture in this wonderful city and strengthening the community relationships I’ve developed over the last year.

COMMENTS FROM SUPERVISORS

Anna Savary

I served as Yumi’s supervisor during her first four months at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. I was really impressed with how quickly she adapted to her new role and built a successful network of contacts not only at UTC but also in the Chattanooga community. She was very independent from day one, managing car insurance, getting her driving license and finally finding her ideal car. She had everything sorted out in no time. She worked very hard during those four months and managed to put together some very interesting community outreach events. She participated in Chattanooga’s Park(ing) Day, a popular outdoor festival and started her long-term partnership with the Discovery Museum. She also worked on preparing Japan-themed events for the International Education Week in November. One of her achievements during that period was generating interest in exchange programs with Japan during the Study Abroad Fair. It was a great pleasure working with Yumi and learning from her during that time.

Takeo Suzuki

Yumi organized programs for the community that our office alone will never be able to host in the past. One of the events, which was well-received by our community, was the “Persona Non-Crata” movie event at one of the largest movie theaters in Chattanooga. Around 70 local community members not only enjoyed the movie, but they had a chance to meet with Ms. Kayoko Fukushima, the new Consulate General of Japan from Nashville. Even the survey about the event suggests 83% of the participants were very satisfied, and 77% of them were satisfied with the event programs and organizations. The process of this event organization involved in three or more dimensions of Yumi’s hard work. She had to work with the university marketing, the local community members, the Japanese government, the local movie theater, and much more. She has been a hard-working asset not only to our university but also for the greater Chattanooga community. Her future effort will build long-lasting partnerships between us and the Japanese culture and beyond.

Laura Livermore

I began serving as Yumi’s supervisor after her former supervisor, Anna Savary, had to relocate. Prior to this, Yumi was supervised by Takeo Suzuki as well (who was her interim supervisor while Anna was on maternity leave). I took over as Yumi’s supervisor as the COVID-19 situation was starting to develop more in the US. So, I have been able to see how Yumi has adapted to being heavily involved in face-to-face community-based events, to transitioning to virtual engagement events. I am sure both Anna and Takeo would agree. Yumi is very independent and does not require much direct supervision in terms of how to schedule/handle events so the transition to virtual events went relatively smooth. She has taken the challenges presented by COVID-19 restrictions, and having to work remotely, and worked hard to still provide community engagement events. She has been very involved in assisting the CCE with our virtual events while also still partnering with community organizations to assist them in offering virtual opportunities to various community members. The past 4 months have been challenging for everyone, but Yumi has worked to adapt to our new environment – working to still serve in her JOI Coordinator position while giving 100%.
My second year of JOI was like a big wave. Due to the pandemic, most activities were virtual. Also, I had to evacuate to Japan for six months. Fortunately, I was able to complete many online events while in Japan — and was later able to return to the U.S. and conclude my contract.

I would like to thank The Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership, The Laurasian Institution, and the UTC Center for Global Education for all the support. I am grateful for this incredible opportunity to promote Japanese culture to the Greater Chattanooga Area over the last two years.

In this report, I would like to highlight my top three outreach activities: virtual community engagements through Zoom, a sushi rolling class, and a Natsu Matsuri festival collaboration with a local business.

1. VIRTUAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENTS THROUGH ZOOM

When COVID-19 was starting to spread more in the U.S., I was not able to hold any in-person events. By being flexible and creative, I was able to adapt fast to the new situation and continue reaching out to people. I hosted 77 events and reached out to 1,014 people through virtual events. Below are some events I worked on during this difficult time.

Learn Japan event

This two-week-long event was one of the biggest Zoom events I held in August 2020. I covered various topics related to Japanese culture, education, business, food, festivals, pop culture, travel, and language. I also gave fun pop quizzes to audience members.

I had 209 people participate in total. The participants were not only from the Chattanooga area, but also from other states. Even my friend from Indonesia was able to join the event. I was glad to reach out to a lot of people and spread positivity through learning Japanese culture.

Here are some quotes from survey feedback:

♦"The contrasts between Japan and America in terms of education were very interesting."
♦"I enjoyed it because it was very interesting to learn about the Japanese culture. Me and my friends would love to go visit one day."
♦"I enjoyed learning about the Japanese language and found the lesson useful!"
♦"I really loved all of them, but the Travel Tips was really good because of the practical advice you shared."
♦"I hadn’t previously realized what a vital role onomatopoeias play in Japanese society. It was very fun and interesting to learn about."
Events hosted by the UTC
Center for Global Education

Our office has hosted a lot of events for students and faculty. One that left an impression on me was when I was invited to be a guest speaker for the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga’s International Buddy Program. At this time, I was in Japan due to the pandemic but was maintaining my role at UTC. This allowed me to share my real life in Japan through live streaming. I introduced students to my daily life in Japan by providing tours of my house, showing them my daily meals, and sharing interesting knickknacks from around my home. It was nice to get reactions and questions in the moment. The students were able to learn outside of the stereotypes and virtually experience the Japanese lifestyle.

Airbnb Experience project

In addition to the Zoom events, I wanted to do something especially exciting to reach out to people. I found people sharing their talents through Airbnb Experiences. I decided to co-host two Airbnb Experiences: “Learn and Train with Samurai in Tokyo” and “Try Drawing Manga Illustration with a Pro.” In these experiences, I was able to share more detailed and specific content to UTC students and faculty who were interested in Japan. All the participants, including myself, enjoyed the chance to learn from a professional.

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✧ “I enjoyed learning about the Japanese language and found the lesson useful!”
✧ “I really loved all of them, but the Travel Tips was really good because of the practical advice you shared.”
✧ “I hadn’t previously realized what a vital role onomatopoeias play in Japanese society. It was very fun and interesting to learn about.”
2. SUSHI ROLLING EVENT

This was my first in-person event after I received my COVID-19 vaccination. Even though it was planned for 2019, due to the pandemic, I was not able to hold this event until July 2021. I was so happy to finally make this happen.

It took place in Athens, TN, with the support of Trinity United Methodist Church. Twenty-two people from the surrounding area were able to participate in this event. They heard basic facts about Japan and learned about different types of sushi before the hands-on activity. They were able to learn the difference between American sushi and Japanese sushi. After that, they enjoyed rolling sushi by themselves.

I was also glad to hear that two of the ladies who attended this class hosted their own sushi rolling class afterwards and taught eight more people how to make sushi rolls. I am confident that I made an impact on people that will last for a long time to come.
3. NATSU MATSURI JAPAN FESTIVAL: COLLABORATION WITH A LOCAL BUSINESS

This event was my final event to conclude my two-year contract as a JOI coordinator. I collaborated with I Go Tokyo, a local store, to hold an event celebrating Natsu Matsuri, the traditional Japanese summer festival, on July 17, 2021. We had so much entertainment at this event. For example:

- Japanese festival food: Yakisoba (fried noodles) and Takoyaki (octopus balls)
- Japanese festival games: Yo-yo tsuri (yo-yo water balloon fishing) and kingyo sukui (fish scooping)
- Japanese cultural showcases: Kendama performance, karate demonstration, daruma doll painting, traditional dancing, and more

About 300 people explored Japanese traditions and culture at this summer festival. People came from Nashville, Knoxville, Atlanta, and the Greater Chattanooga Area. Although this event was planned on a short timeline, it was a huge success. I really appreciate all the volunteers and the I Go Tokyo store for making this event happen.
CONCLUSION OF JOI

Looking back on my two years as a JOI coordinator, I am mostly satisfied with participating in this program.

Early on, I visited a lot of schools, had regular events at the Creative Discovery Museum, made an official Japan Table club at UTC, worked with local businesses, did a movie event in cooperation with the Consulate-General of Japan in Nashville, and made a lot of great relationships around the area.

One of my goals for this year was to create sustainable ways for the Chattanooga community to learn about Japan. Since the UTC Library didn’t have many resources about Japan, I donated some books and DVDs to add to its collection. All the new resources related to Japan will be stored in the library, and students will have access whenever they need it. Also, the UTC Library is now working to make a related online exhibit for the upcoming semester. I hope this will help bring more interest of Japanese culture among the UTC community.

Honesty, I didn’t expect my JOI experience would be in the middle of a pandemic and mostly include virtual interaction, but I had a lot to learn from it. I learned how to take advantage of new tools, use new techniques, and be creative. Also, I’ve been more flexible and adaptable than I have ever been before.

Without a doubt, my perspective changed through a lot of the experiences I had in these past two years. Living with three different host families was a fantastic experience too. Especially incredible was my experience staying with a Jewish family. It helped me diversify my worldview and expand my perspective, and I believe I had the same effect on them.

Under unexpected challenges, I continued to expand awareness of Japanese culture in this wonderful city while strengthening community relationships.

I would like to note that I have accomplished my goals with great support from my hosting institution — the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga — and many community partners here in Chattanooga.

I would also like to thank the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership and The Laurasian Institution for letting us continue this program in spite of the pandemic.

Thank you very much for everything. Hope to see you again someday!

COMMENTS FROM SUPERVISOR

As I sit here, a week and a half before Yumi’s departure, I reflect back on the past 2 years of her time here at UTC and in Chattanooga. It has certainly been an eventful two years, involving supervisor changes, pandemics, moves back to Japan and back to Chattanooga, and a final two months of wrapping up time as both Supervisor and Coordinator. Despite all that the past two years have brought. I truly believe the experiences that have come about through the JOI program have been thoroughly worthwhile and fulfilling to the UTC campus and Chattanooga community.

Yumi has been an amazing individual to have on our CGE team and to have as a resource on Japanese language and culture. I can say our office staff is better for having her in our lives over the past 2 years and I know all those community members she has interacted with have taken away new information about Japan. We are fortunate that our campus was able to host another JOI Coordinator and I’m lucky that I got the chance to experience the JOI Supervisor role.

While the past months haven’t been easy, Yumi has done a wonderful job of working to engage in new ways and to finish her Coordinator role on a strong note (over 300 people having attended her final event, in collaboration with I Go Tokyo). We will truly miss having Yumi in our office and as part of our team, but the memories made have been amazing and we are forever grateful for that!